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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 47/180 of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly decided to convene a second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held at Istanbul, from 3 to 14 June 1996, and established a Preparatory Committee, open to participation by all Member States, to oversee preparations for the Conference. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its forty-ninth session on the progress of work of the Preparatory Committee. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. The Secretary-General believes that, in addition to a report on the progress of work of the Preparatory Committee, as requested in General Assembly resolution 47/180, Member States may also wish to receive a summary account of activities by the Secretariat, so as to obtain a comprehensive overview of progress in preparing for the Conference. He has accordingly annexed to the present report a summary status report of the activities of the Secretariat related to the preparations for the Conference. The present report should also be reviewed in conjunction with the report of the Preparatory Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, 1/ which provides a detailed record of work and the decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session at the United Nations Office at Geneva between 11 and 22 April 1994.

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* A/49/150.

3. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) aims to address pressing human settlement issues and problems within the overall context of sustainable development and has the following main objectives:

(a) In the long term, to arrest the deterioration of global human settlements conditions and ultimately create the conditions for achieving improvements in the living environment of all people on a sustainable basis, with special attention to the needs and contributions of women and vulnerable social groups, whose quality of life and participation in development have been hampered by exclusion and inequality, affecting the poor in general;

(b) To adopt a general statement of principles and commitments and formulate a related global plan of action capable of guiding national and international efforts through the first two decades of the next century.

4. In addition, the General Assembly affirmed that the Conference should:

(a) Review trends in human settlements policies and programmes undertaken to implement the recommendations adopted at the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held at Vancouver, Canada, in 1976; 2/

(b) Conduct a mid-term review of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000;

(c) Review the implementation of Agenda 21 with respect to human settlements;

(d) Review current global trends in economic and social development as they relate to human settlements, and to include recommendations for future actions at the national and international levels.

II. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS OF PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

A. Organizational session of the Preparatory Committee

5. The Preparatory Committee held its organizational session at United Nations Headquarters from 3 to 5 March 1993. The Committee elected Mr. Robert Lloyd Wenman (Canada) Chairman, Ms. Pamela Mboya (Kenya), Mr. Stanley Kalpagé (Sri Lanka) and Mr. Hassan Azizogly Hassanov (Azerbaijan) as Vice-Chairmen and Ms. Marjorie Ulloa (Ecuador) as Rapporteur. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/180, the host country for the Conference, Turkey, became an ex-officio member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee. The Preparatory Committee took decisions regarding the organization of its work, adopted guidelines for the accreditation of non-governmental organizations and decided that its first substantive session should take place at Geneva from 11 April to 22 April 1994. The Preparatory Committee invited the Commission on Human Settlements to provide it with recommendations on substantive issues for the Conference in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/180 and to draft guidelines for consideration and adoption by the Preparatory Committee at its first session, so as to enable States to take a harmonized approach in their preparations and reporting. The Preparatory Committee further invited States

Members and Observers of the United Nations to submit written proposals to be considered by the Commission on Human Settlements at its fourteenth session when drawing up recommendations on substantive topics for the Conference.

B. First substantive session

6. The Preparatory Committee held its first substantive session at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 11 to 22 April 1994. The session was attended by the representatives of 94 States, 11 United Nations programmes and organizations, 7 specialized agencies and 4 intergovernmental organizations, as well as by a delegation from Palestine, a representative of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), 21 non-governmental organizations and 13 other organizations. At its opening session, the Preparatory Committee was notified of the withdrawal of Canada from the Chairmanship of the Committee. The Committee then elected Mr. Martti Lujanen (Finland) Chairman of the Committee.

7. The session was inaugurated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who in his opening address stressed the necessity for urgent attention to the plight of the world's human settlements, especially in the developing countries. In addition to millions of people around the world who were fleeing wars, famine, environmental degradation and natural disasters, more still were migrating for economic reasons. The largest migration in human history was under way, and the primary destinations were the world's urban areas. These same concerns were echoed by the delegates at the session. With cities and towns undergoing such phenomenal growth in the developing countries and the overwhelming majority of the population of every country destined to live in urban areas by the early years of the twenty-first century, human settlements had become the terrain on which the most pressing problems of development were to be confronted. Cities were wrestling with economic development, environmental degradation, ethnic tension, substance abuse and social disintegration.

8. Some 50 years after the creation of the United Nations, absolute poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy were still the lot of hundreds of millions of human beings, and the pressures resulting from growing human misery were increasingly shifting to cities, making the challenge of sustainable development more and more an urban challenge. Therefore, the global plan of action to emerge from the Habitat II Conference in 1996 should provide a tangible means by which to implement the decisions and recommendations of such other major United Nation conferences as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (June 1992), the International Conference on Population and Development (September 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (March 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (September 1995), as well as other related United Nations Conferences. Thus, the Habitat II global plan of action will draw inspiration from, and be an integral part of, a decade of major United Nations conferences that will determine the development path to be followed by the international community throughout the early decades of the twenty-first century.

9. Against this background, and with these goals in mind, the delegates to the first substantive session met in both plenary session and in working groups, to

address a broad range of issues relevant to the preparations for and organization of the Conference, including the draft statement of principles and commitments and the draft global plan of action.

10. The debate and discussions in the working groups and their respective ad hoc drafting groups was intensive and was marked by wide and active participation on the part of the delegates, reflecting the urgency of the issues addressed by the Preparatory Committee. In general, the first session of the Preparatory Committee provided the context and set the tone for the preparatory process. Delegates outlined their initial positions on the issues and identified areas of convergence and divergence. As negotiations progressed a consensus began to emerge that the preparatory process of the Conference should focus on the issue of urbanization and its impact on both urban and rural settlements. In large measure, this session dealt with process. Key issues, such as the matter of financing of human settlements development were raised, but not resolved.

11. The Preparatory Committee was very receptive to participation by and contributions from non-governmental organizations, industrial groups and local government representatives, reflecting a broad range of actors concerned with human settlements development and management. Consequently, non-governmental organizations participated actively throughout the session, with many countries specifically including representatives of non-governmental organizations in their delegations. However, in deference to the views of a number of countries that wished to emphasize the intergovernmental nature of the Conference and its preparatory process, it was agreed that Member States should have the freedom to choose their own rules of access for participation of non-governmental organizations at the national level.

12. By the conclusion of the two-week session, the Preparatory Committee had reached agreement on broad issues of process, which had been its main charge at this first substantive session. It clearly established the major orientation, objectives and focus of the Conference, its preparatory process and expected outcome. In particular, stress was placed on a successful national preparatory process for the Conference. The national preparatory process was to be viewed as a contribution to the strengthening of institutions, capacity and awareness-building on urbanization, shelter and other human settlements development issues. This would enable all levels of Government, non-governmental organizations, community organizations, the private sector and professional organizations to analyse and review human settlements strategies, policies and programmes within the context of their importance to the realization of major development objectives of the international community. Among such development objectives to be advanced are poverty alleviation and employment generation; enhancement of the human and natural environment; decentralization and good management; and disaster preparedness, mitigation and reconstruction. The development and the use of indicators to measure and track the state of human settlements and to assess the performance of policy reform was also intensively discussed and broad agreement reached that such indicators should be used on a limited basis in the national reports that each country would prepare.

13. Delegates also reached agreement on the formats of the draft global plan of action and the draft statement of principles and commitments and provided

further guidance to the Secretariat as to major issues to be addressed in both documents. These documents are to be further reviewed by the Preparatory Committee at its next substantive session, in April 1995. There was general agreement among the delegates that the Conference's plan of action should take into account the relevant conclusions and decisions of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held at Vancouver in 1976, as well as such other United Nations conferences as, for example, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit on Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, all of which precede the Habitat II Conference. There was general agreement that Habitat II can play a vital role in bringing together the results of these conferences and help translate them into concrete action at the human settlements level.

14. Furthermore, the Preparatory Committee, in the light of the importance of the Conference for achieving a betterment of global human settlements conditions and for reaching the major sustainable development objectives of the international community, addressed the issue of financing for the Conference and its preparatory process, and made a number of recommendations. It also noted, bearing in mind the extensive programme of work it had projected for accomplishment between the first substantive session in 1994 and the Conference itself, and noting that only one more substantive session of the Committee was envisaged before the Conference, that a third substantive session of short duration would be required to allow the Preparatory Committee adequately to complete its work.

III. DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

15. At its 6th plenary meeting, on 22 April 1994, the Preparatory Committee adopted a number of decisions, the importance and implications of which for the Conference and its preparatory process are analysed below. These decisions appear in the report of the Committee, adopted at its 7th plenary meeting, on 22 April 1994. 1/

A. Decision I/1: third session of the Preparatory Committee

16. In this decision, the Preparatory Committee recommended to the General Assembly that a third substantive session of the Preparatory Committee of relatively short duration be held early in 1996. This decision was taken in the light of the Committee's conviction that a third substantive session of the Preparatory Committee would be necessary to enable the Committee to complete its work, including reviewing national plans of action proposed by National Committees and for the Secretariat to reflect more completely on the draft global plan of action and the draft statement of principles and commitments and on national inputs to be received from Member States.

Implications

17. The above decision, by allowing more time for the exercise, would enable Member States and the Secretariat to prepare a realistic and comprehensive draft global plan of action and a draft statement of principles and commitments based, inter alia, on priorities identified by Member States and on the conclusions of and decisions taken at forthcoming major United Nations conferences, particularly those such as the World Summit on Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in 1995. The Secretariat is making adequate preparations for effective utilization of the opportunity created by a third session of the Preparatory Committee.

B. Decision I/2: Recommendations by the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) at its first substantive session on preparations at the country, regional and global levels, on the draft statement of principles and commitments and on the draft global plan of action

18. This decision outlines, inter alia, the following objectives for the preparatory process, particularly at the national level and for the Conference itself:

(a) The objective for the preparatory process and for Habitat II is to increase the global awareness of the problems and potentials of human settlements - as important inputs to social progress and economic growth - and to commit the world's leaders to making cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, just and sustainable;

(b) National objectives:

(i) To design, adopt and implement a national plan of action;

(ii) To strengthen the capacity of institutions at all levels;

(c) International objectives:

(i) To present a "State of human settlements" report, describing the main challenges, concerns and constraints, and build a vision of sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter for all;

(ii) To produce a draft statement of principles and commitments based on a new international consensus on policies and goals for shelter and the future of human settlements;

(iii) To produce a draft global plan of action to mobilize international resources, create institutional arrangements for assistance and monitor the goals of sustainable human settlements;

(iv) To make available the broadest possible range of information concerning public and private shelter strategies, technologies, resources, experience, expertise and sources of support relevant to shelter and urbanization needs and initiatives.

Implications

19. The above three objectives require the following specific implementing activities:

(a) Prepare and disseminate guidelines for the preparatory process, highlighting the necessity to harmonize human settlements policies, strategies and programmes with those of the social, economic and environmental sectors;

(b) Adoption of a two-year work programme by National Committees;

(c) Setting up, in collaboration with relevant agencies and actors within and outside the United Nations system, of institutional support and capacity-building programmes by the Secretariat and the international community at large;

(d) Setting up, in collaboration with relevant agencies and actors within and outside the United Nations system, of an information sharing and communication facility, on policies and strategies, technology, research, experience and expertise in the human settlements sector;

(e) Expanding, in collaboration with relevant actors within and outside the United Nations system, the scope and coverage of existing programmes on the main themes and central issues of the Conference.

20. With regard to the fourth objective, participation, the Preparatory Committee encouraged countries to create broad-based national committees for the in-country preparations for Habitat II, with the main responsibilities of formulating, adopting and implementing a work programme. Countries were also encouraged to form coalitions of key actors and community groups in the human settlements sector, while the Secretary-General of the Conference would facilitate international partnerships for advisory services to countries.

Implications

21. This recommendation further reinforced the broad-based participation called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/180, as well as the institutional support and capacity-building dimension of the preparatory process. This implies that the Secretariat should undertake a major outreach and awareness-building effort.

22. The fifth objective relates to organization of the conference:

(a) Attendance should be at the highest possible level but also broadly based;

(b) United Nations regional commissions have a central role to play in the regional level activities;

(c) The organization of a self-financing world fair, relevant to the concerns of Habitat II, should be arranged with special attention to the participation of firms and organizations that offer appropriate, low-cost and environmentally-sound technologies;

(d) Broad-based forums parallel to the main activities of the Conference, attended by representatives from all governmental levels and non-governmental organizations, will be encouraged;

(e) The second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee should focus on discussing submissions prepared at the national and regional levels; progress of the preparatory process; identifying emerging conclusions; and reviewing the draft texts of the report on the state of human settlements, the statement of principles and commitments and the format and content of the global plan of action.

23. The sixth objective concerns the financing of Habitat II and its preparatory activities:

(a) It was recommended that funds for assistance be distributed according to a scheme whereby 50 per cent of the funds would be allocated equally among the developing countries and the remainder to such countries according to their needs as established by relevant factors;

(b) Requests for support should be initiated by the National Committees and be part of their two-year work programme, and should be complete, specific and prioritized;

(c) The Secretary-General of the Conference should be informed of direct bilateral transactions in the context of Habitat II.

Implications

24. The following implications arise for Secretariat from the fifth and sixth objectives:

(a) The need for setting up of system-wide, inter-agency collaboration in support of the Habitat II preparatory process in order to make efficient and optimal use of the resources of the system;

(b) Timely receipt of detailed and specific two-year work programmes prepared by National Committees so as to enable the secretariat to channel requests for support to relevant bodies of the United Nations system and to bilateral and multilateral donor agencies;

(c) The need to establish a reporting system, by the secretariat, to monitor and document multilateral and bilateral support to in-country preparations.

25. The seventh objective relates to the draft statement of principles and commitments and the draft global plan of action:

(a) The overall principle of the draft statement of principles and commitments should be the section of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which states: "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature." 3/ The statement should also consider other relevant principles from the Rio Declaration;

(b) The Secretary-General of the Conference should consider both thematic and operational principles in preparing the draft statement;

(c) The main objective of the draft global plan of action should be derived from the language containod in the human settlements chapter of Agenda 21: "The overall human settlement objective is to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor." 4/ It should further be structured around the two main themes of the Conference: "Adequate shelter for all" and "Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world";

(d) The global plan should be built on national reports and plans of action, inputs of United Nations regional commissions, regional banks and other appropriate organizations, in order to provide a means for the development of international institutional arrangements and to give guidance for the development of effective policies and programmes for human settlements concerns in national plans up to and through the first two decades of the next century.

Implications

26. The Secretariat would be required:

(a) To prepare and disseminate guidelines to National Committees on possible methods and approaches to be used for the development and analysis of policies and programmes to be reflected in the national plan of action;

(b) To follow up with Member States, United Nations regional commissions, the World Bank, regional banks, and other appropriate organizations on the submission to the Secretariat of national reports and plans of action;

(c) To analyze and process the data contained in national reports and plans of action and set up an appropriate documentation system for the same;

(d) To report to the Preparatory Committee at its second session on the progress on submissions received and processed and its implications for the draft global plan of action.

C. Decision I/3: Accreditation of non-governmental organizations

27. Accreditation of non-governmental organizations has been granted as follows:

(a) Sixteen non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council have been granted accreditation;

(b) Nineteen non-governmental organizations which have applied with all the required information have been granted accreditation;

(c) Twenty-four non-governmental organizations are in the process of being granted accreditation.

Implications

28. The implication, for the Secretariat, of the above decision is likely to be an increasing number of requests for substantive and other forms of support from the secretariat to facilitate the active participation and involvement of non-governmental organization in in-country preparatory processes and for their effective participation in future sessions of the Preparatory Committee and the Conference itself. The Secretariat is taking appropriate steps to enhance its links with the non-governmental organization community, in the context particularly of preparations for the Habitat II Conference. During the intersessional period, non-governmental organizations are expected to pursue two objectives: raising awareness and assisting in the preparatory activities of the National Committees. Raising awareness will involve networking with other non-governmental organizations, so as to encourage broader participation at the next session of the Preparatory Committee and to ensure that considerations related to human settlements are on the agenda of forthcoming United Nations and other related conferences. While recommendations are made at the international level, implementation can only be initiated by Governments and carried through by a wide range of actors, including non-governmental organizations. The organizations will attempt to facilitate this process and will provide information at the regional and local levels. Also at the national level, non-governmental organizations are expected to participate in the drafting of national plans of action.

D. Decision I/4: Subsidiary bodies of the Preparatory Committee

29. The Preparatory Committee decided that its subsidiary committees should henceforth be designated as working groups.

E. Decision I/5: Date of second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee

30. This decision contains the recommendation that the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee be held at Nairobi, from 24 April to

5 May 1995. It implies that the session of the Preparatory Committee will overlap with the fifteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements (now proposed for 25 April to 1 May 1995), which will affect both the resources required to service the two concurrent meetings, as well as the organization of work of the two meetings.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 37 (A/49/37).

2/ See Report of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, 31 May-11 June 1976 (United Nations publication, Sales No. 76.IV.7 and corrigendum).

3/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)). (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex I.

4/ Ibid., annex II.

ANNEX

Summary status report on activities of the Secretariat related to the preparations for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

I. FOLLOW-UP TO THE FIRST SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

1. Immediately after the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, important contacts were initiated with United Nations agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to prepare a programmatic diagram for all preparatory activities leading to the Istanbul Conference. Discussions were held with, inter alia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Towns Organization (UTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as with the International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI) and the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA).

2. The programmatic diagram is accompanied by a series of initiating briefs that provide a brief description of sub-objectives, outputs, activities and required funding for each activity leading to and during the Habitat II Conference. This blueprint for the Conference and its preparatory activities can be summarized as follows:

A. Core activities

3. These are activities to be undertaken by the secretariat. They fall into three categories:

(a) Support to thematic preparations

This set of activities includes the development of substantive position papers on key issues of the Conference, such as shelter, poverty, environment, decentralization and management and disaster preparedness, mitigation and reconstruction. Each of the issues will be the focus of regional workshops designed to assist National Committees in preparing their reviews and analyses. The results of the workshops will feed into Conference documentation and provide the basis for ad hoc thematic round tables to take place at Istanbul.

In addition to the above, position papers and seminars will be organized on two special issues of direct relevance to the Conference, one on financing shelter and urban development and one on land.

(b) Direct support to in-country preparations

Four areas of technical advisory services and support are foreseen as follows:

(i) Support to broad-based partnerships and consultations;

(ii) Application of shelter and urban indicators;

(iii) Learning from best practices in settlements management;

(iv) Gender-sensitivity and awareness.

The primary means of support envisaged include technical advisory missions, assistance to policy consultations, and the hiring of local consultants to assist national committees in data gathering, analysis and reporting.

(c) Global plan of action

This activity will entail the analysis of priorities identified by national plans of action and the formulation of a realistic and implementable global plan of action. It will also entail proposals for putting into place mechanisms and instruments for financing the Global Plan of Action.

B. Independent activities

4. These are activities to be undertaken by other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and international associations on issues and themes related to the Conference. Their purpose is to enrich the preparatory process with the experiences gained and lessons learnt from ongoing activities involving the international community at large. Discussions and negotiations are currently under way with, inter alia, UNICEF, the regional economic commissions, specialized agencies such as FAO, ILO, UNESCO and WHO, as well as the World Bank and regional development banks and others. Eight colloquiums for representatives of National Committees and agency focal points are envisaged as an additional means of support to in-country preparations. Results of the colloquiums will feed into conference documentation and enrich the process leading to the preparation of the draft global plan of action.

C. Special programmes and awareness-building

5. These activities are to be sponsored or co-sponsored by public and private sector foundations and professional associations. They are intended to mobilize specific audiences through the following types of activities:

(a) Urban design competitions;

(b) Awards for best photographs, videos, press and media reporting on the cross-cutting issues and themes of the Conference;

(c) A book on "Cities for People";

(d) Awards for "best practice".

6. These activities, and others, will provide inputs to and the basis for material to be presented at the planned world fair, tentatively entitled: Exposition of Good Ideas for Better Cities", to be held in parallel to the Conference.

7. Finally, the diagram outlines activities to take place during the two weeks of the Conference, notably:

(a) Partners forums during the first three days of the Conference. Five partners forums are envisaged, one each for city associations, professional associations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations and parliamentarians.

(b) Thematic round tables on goals of the conference, i.e. healthier, safer, more sustainable and equitable cities. These round tables will result in documentation and statements that will feed into and enrich the deliberations of the Conference.

8. The programmatic diagram, together with a guide to Habitat II, is being circulated to all Governments, National Committees, multilateral bodies and agencies, as well as other associations and organizations, for consideration. The secretariat welcomes comments and feedback, as both the diagram and the guide will be updated on a continuous basis.

II. WORK OF OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES AND INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCES OF RELEVANCE TO HABITAT II

9. At its twenty-second session, in Rome from 11 to 13 May 1994, the Subcommittee on Rural Development of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, agreed that the issue of rural-urban linkages in a rapidly urbanizing world was of increasing importance. Several agencies indicated their willingness to contribute inputs to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) for the preparation of a paper on rural-urban linkages to be discussed by the Subcommittee and subsequently presented to the Habitat II Conference. The Subcommittee further expressed its appreciation of the formation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Joint Task Force on the Continuum from Relief to Development, which will provide inputs to the discussion of the issue of disaster preparedness, mitigation and reconstruction during the preparatory process and at the Habitat II Conference.

10. At its second session, held in New York in May 1994, the Commission on Sustainable Development reviewed, with appreciation, the report of the Secretary-General a/ and the background paper prepared by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) on promoting sustainable human settlements development. The Commission recognized the challenges posed by rapid urbanization for sustainable development, particularly as it contributed

to a worsening of living conditions affecting large segments of the population in developing countries. The Commission drew special attention to the potential contribution of Habitat II, as it will be a key conference to advance further the objectives of Agenda 21. It recommended that Governments and the international community give priority attention to human settlements issues and requested that Governments, the international community, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the private sector and the non-governmental organizations fully support Habitat II, including at the regional level.

III. IN-COUNTRY ACTIVITIES FOR HABITAT II

A. Activities at the country level

11. Reports from national committees on the progress of their work will be presented to the Preparatory Committee at its next session. In the course of the preparation of these progress reports, National Committees are expected to include detailed two-year work programmes emphasizing priority issues and areas of focus, as well as the major changes in human settlements development since 1976. These reports may also contain, inter alia, examples of the best practice in the public and private sectors in addressing human settlements problems and resource constraints; highlight current urban policy issues at national, regional and city levels and the policy and strategy options based on the preliminary conclusions of the participatory process. During the remaining period, National Committees are also expected to prepare national action plans and a first-step commitment for the period 1996-2000. These plans should reflect a common view of the challenges ahead, as well as realistic targets and timetables for improving human settlements policies, strategies and institutional arrangements and for harmonizing them with those of the economic and social sectors. This will enable the Conference to prepare a global plan of action for 1996-2020, including a first-phase National Action Plan for 1996-2000 for re-orienting international cooperation and assistance towards capacity-building support to national plans of action.

12. As at 1 June 1994, the following countries had communicated to the Secretariat the start-up of actions in relation to the preparatory process for Habitat II: Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Congo, Cuba, France, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tonga, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania and United States of America. Other countries are expected to begin with the start-up of national preparatory activities over the coming months.

B. Briefing missions

13. The following briefing missions on Habitat II and its preparatory process were undertaken:

(a) In Africa: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa;

(b) In Arab States: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and United Arab Emirates;

(c) In Asia: Afghanistan, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand;

(d) In Europe: Italy, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Sweden and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;

(e) In Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and El Salvador;

(f) In North America: Canada and United States of America.

C. Preparations under way in the host country of the Conference

14. Administrative and legal actions have been completed to set up the National Committee and responsible bodies related to the Habitat II Conference. The Housing Development Administration of Turkey has been assigned as the focal point to coordinate and carry out the technical and logistical tasks together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will be responsible for external issues and coordination.

15. Private sector associations relevant to the mandate of Habitat II (such as the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Turkish Contractors Association, etc.) have been contacted and their involvement in the preparations of the Habitat II Conference, particularly the organizational activities for the world fair have been initiated. Under the coordination of the Housing Development Administration, a pre-feasibility study for the organization of a self-financing world fair is under way. This study will constitute the basis for a more extensive feasibility study to be conducted in the course of 1994.

16. Some major universities have started to focus on the draft global plan of action. These universities, in cooperation with other related institutions, will also help prepare the national action plan of Turkey.

17. Professional associations, such as the Union of Turkish Engineers and Architects, are actively involved in awareness-building within Turkey. Member associations and individual members will be informed and invited to participate actively in the Habitat II preparatory process. The Union of Turkish Engineers and Architects, together with the office of the International Union of Local Authorities for the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Region, are very well placed to support preparatory activities for the Conference, notably partners forums for professional associations and academic institutions, mayors and city associations.

18. The Habitat II secretariat is also initiating a joint United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) technical cooperation project on the integration of environment planning and preservation strategies in metropolitan Istanbul. This project will make use of all the existing institutional capacity to integrate efforts in preserving cultural and architectural heritage within the development planning process.

The project is expected to provide recommendations and demonstrate practical strategies in this field for other urban centres. It is expected that the achievement of this proposed project will be publicized during the Conference in Istanbul.

19. The Secretary-General of Habitat II is expected to visit Turkey in early August 1994 to hold discussions with officials of the Government under whose auspices in-country preparatory activities for Habitat II have been initiated. The Secretary-General will also meet with high government officials directly involved in the preparations for the Conference. Additionally, the Secretary-General will visit Istanbul to hold preliminary consultations regarding the Conference with civic leaders.

IV. SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATIONS, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

20. At the first session of the Preparatory Committee, considerable clarification and guidance was provided on the focus of the Conference and on the nature of global and in-country preparatory activities to be undertaken. This has enabled the secretariat to refine its overall strategy and to formulate an information and communication plan for the entire period up to and including the Conference itself. Under a contract from the secretariat, the Earth Negotiations Bulletin has released a synopsis on the deliberations and outcome of Preparatory Committee I. In the six weeks following the Preparatory Committee, the secretariat produced an interim flyer entitled "The City Summit", as well as a fourth issue of the Habitat II Bulletin, for dissemination through its consolidated mailing list and through distribution at key international meetings and conferences. A second information kit has been prepared and is presently being printed. This kit will include the following items: (a) a flyer entitled "The City Summit"; (b) "A Guide to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)"; (c) an advance copy of the report of the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II); (d) Habitat II Bulletin, fourth issue (Preparatory Committee issue), June 1994; (e) address of 11 April 1994 by the Secretary-General to the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee; and (f) General Assembly resolution 47/180 of 22 December 1992, entitled United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

21. In addition to the first Guide to Habitat II mentioned above, the secretariat is preparing a sub-set of guides for: (a) applying urban indicators; (b) nominating and learning from best practice; and (c) guides for specific groups of actors, including local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. These guides are intended to assist National Committees in organizing and submitting their work and to establish regular channels of communication using all available and appropriate means and technologies.

22. A video on the goals of the Conference and approaches to in-country preparations has also been prepared and will be ready for dissemination shortly. The Habitat II guide will provide the contact address for obtaining copies of the video and other information materials.

23. Negotiations are under way with a number of press agencies and public relations firms for public awareness-building activities at the global level. Terms of reference have been prepared for the preparation of an official brochure on the Conference in the six official languages of the United Nations. The brochure is expected to be ready for dissemination in early August 1994.

V. PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

24. The secretariat has prepared a draft proposal for the organization of work for the second session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II. A number of suggestions and recommendations are being submitted to the bureaux of both the Preparatory Committee and the Commission on Human Settlements, as several items of both agendas are interrelated and will require careful scheduling.

VI. FUNDING

25. The most important challenge facing the Secretariat is funding. Every effort is currently being made to capitalize on the goodwill and positive outcome of the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, which has already resulted in some significant progress in mobilizing extrabudgetary resources. The Secretariat is hopeful that the evident and widespread political support that exists for the goals of the Conference will translate before too long into sufficient financial support for successful implementation of this major United Nations undertaking. No effort will be spared to achieve this.

Notes

a/ E/CN.17/1994/5.